

Govind Ballabh Pant

A Profile in Courage

D. N. PANIGRAHI



राष्ट्रीय शैक्षिक अनुसंधान और प्रशिक्षण परिषद्
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

January 1988
Pausa 1909

P.D. 5T—SD

© National Council of Educational Research and Training, 1988

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

- ☐ No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher.
- ☐ This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise disposed of, without the publisher's consent, in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published.
- ☐ The correct price of this publication is the price printed on this page. Any revised price indicated by a rubber stamp or by a sticker or by any other means is incorrect and should be unacceptable.

Publication Team

C. N. Rao, *Head, Publication Department*

Prabhakar Dwivedi *Chief Editor* U. Prabhakar Rao *Chief Production Officer*

Santo Datta *Editor* D. Sai Prasad *Production Officer*

J. P. Sharma *Assistant Editor* C. P. Landan *Art Officer*

Shashi Chaddha *Editorial Assistant* Rati Ram *Production Assistant*

Cover : Santo Datta

Rs. 8.30

Published at the Publication Department by the Secretary, National Council of Educational Research and Training, Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016 and printed at Raj Bandhu Indl Co., C-61, Mayapuri, Phase II, New Delhi 110064

Foreword

India's major concern today is the preservation of unity and integrity of the country. The noble ideals of patriotism, nationalism, secularism and social justice which have inspired the entire nation during the struggle for national liberation seem to have been somewhat blurred after the attainment of independence. At this juncture, it is imperative to renew our faith in these abiding values in order to regenerate the spirit of India. The NCERT has assiduously sought to promote these values. Efforts have been made to transmit them through stories of men and women, who have left an indelible mark on the history of India's struggle for freedom. The present book tells the story of the life and ideals of Bharat Ratna Govind Ballabh Pant, one of India's greatest sons.

Govind Ballabh Pant was product of Indian national movement, at the same time he led the Indian people in their fight for freedom. He was a great patriot and his commitment to India's composite culture was total. As a parliamentarian, he reached commanding heights, and proved to be an able administrator, social reformer and a man of impeccable integrity. He was no doubt one of India's great nation builders. His life and ideals are worthy of emulation by one and all. Jawaharlal Nehru in his writings has paid eloquent tribute to his

statesmanship and the contribution which he made to the preservation of India's cultural heritage and national integrity. And above all, Nehru said Govind Ballabh Pant was a gentleman and a lovable human being in whom education, culture and humanism blended admirably

I am glad that Professor D N Panigrahi, an historian of Indian nationalism, Department of Education in Social Sciences and Humanities, NCERT, has written this interesting and readable book, which we hope would inform and inspire children of school-going age in India

P L MALHOTRA

Director

National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi

Contents

FOREWORD		iii
Chapter 1	Childhood, Education, Early Influences	1
Chapter 2	Entry into Public life	12
Chapter 3	Influence of Gandhiji	19
Chapter 4	Vision of Rural India	25
Chapter 5	A National Leader	35
Chapter 6	Letters from Prison	44
Chapter 7	Pant's Administrative Vision	51



Govind Ballabh Pant with his grandson, Santosh

CHAPTER 1

Childhood, Education and Early Influences

All of you know that the Himalayan mountains extend from Jammu & Kashmir in the north-west to Arunachal Pradesh in the north-east of India. From time immemorial these majestic mountains have stood in silent grandeur guarding the northern frontiers of India. If you look at the map of India you will notice that these mountains stretch from north-west to north-east forming a semi-circle. That is why an imaginative poet has described the Himalayas as a beautiful crown worn by Mother India.

‘Himalaya’ literally means the abode of snow; but many legends are current in Indian mythology about the sacredness and greatness of these mountains. The sacred Ganga originates in this abode of snow and a number of holy shrines and temples have sprung up on its route since remote antiquity. Surely you have heard of Gangotri and Badrinath temples situated in the mid-Himalayan ranges in Uttar Pradesh. People from distant corners of India from Kanyakumari to Gujarat, from Orissa to Maharashtra and from Bengal to Jammu & Kashmir, visit these temples and places of pilgrimage.

The ancestors of Govind Ballabh Pant came from Maharashtra nearly a thousand years ago on pilgrimage to these holy places, and enchanted by their beauty decided to settle down on the Himalayan foothills, in the Kumaon hills in Uttar Pradesh

When the British ruled over these hilly regions in the nineteenth century, a number of hill-stations, as they were called, were developed. That is how the townships of Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, Nainital in Uttar Pradesh, Darjeeling in West Bengal, Ootacamund in the South, Mahabaleswar in Maharashtra, Panchmarhi in Madhya Pradesh, to mention a few of them, were established by the British. As you know, the British came from a very cold climate and could not bear the summer heat of India and hence they spent nearly five to six months in a year in these towns, which served as summer capitals of respective provinces. Many of you may have visited some hill-station or the other to escape the heat of the summer months.

In Uttar Pradesh, in the Kumaon hills, are situated Nainital, Almora and Kashipur, which are well-known hill-stations. It was in Almora that Govind Ballabh Pant was born a hundred years ago on September 10, 1887

The beautiful landscape of the Kumaon hills enchanted every visitor. It is sheer joy to breathe the cool, fresh air and listen to the rustling sound of the wind blowing across the deep valleys and lush green forests of the mountains. Equally captivating is the music of gurgling spring waters flowing down from the mountain ranges towards the plains. The people of the hills therefore love nature. They love music and dance too, which are essential parts of their social life. Govind Ballabh Pant was also very fond of music.

The joy of living in the land of beauty, however,

was marred by the harshness of the realities of life. To eke out a living in these regions was not easy. Unlike in the plains, only the hill slopes near the rivers and springs are fit for cultivation and crops are produced after a good deal of labour. You know, in the Gangetic basin of Uttar Pradesh crops are produced in plenty and with much less labour. People in the hills were not very rich. Agriculture, rearing of cattle like sheep, goats and milch cows were their principal occupations. Rice, jawar, bajra, vegetables and occasionally, some wheat were grown. Coarse woollen clothes were manufactured along with some handicrafts. The economy of the towns was mostly dependent on the population which came on pilgrimage or visits to these hill-stations and the goods of everyday needs were transported to the hills from the plains.

In the nineteenth century, as the British rule penetrated into these areas, roads were constructed, linking up several towns. Bungalows for the British were built. Schools run by Christian missions were started and courts and police establishments were set up for administration, and the economy began to flourish. But the people of the hills, by and large, remained poor, their demands were few and they led a simple rural life. Only the landed gentry and the merchant class thrived along with the administrators.

As for the ancestors of Govind Ballabh Pant, the story was different. Most of them were able and well-educated according to the standards of those days and enjoyed the patronage of the rulers of the land. In the nineteenth century, when the British ruled over the Kumaon hills, Govind Ballabh Pant's father, Manorath Pant and maternal grandfather, Badri Dutt Joshi, were men of means and held positions of importance in the British administration of Kumaon.

Badri Dutt Joshi, maternal grandfather of Govind Ballabh Pant, was a Sadr Amin and a great confidant of Sir Henry Ramsay, Commissioner of Kumaon. Joshi was a wealthy man and lived in style and enjoyed considerable power in the area. Pant's father was also appointed to a fairly good position in the Almora court, who later rose to be a Revenue Collector, in Kumaon. When he was transferred to Kashipur from Almora, he left behind his wife and the child (Govind) to be looked after by the joint household of Joshi.

Govind Ballabh was a bright child and learnt his alphabet at home. Till the age of ten, he received education from private tutors, under the care of his maternal grandfather. He was deeply interested in his studies, and through his intelligence, he acquired sufficient mastery in mathematics. In 1897, he joined the Primary School of Ramsay College, Almora. In all his class examinations he did very well, and passed with credits. It is said that the mathematics teacher of his school was greatly impressed by him and whenever the teacher was unable to solve a problem, Govind was called upon to solve it, and however difficult the sum might have been, he always succeeded in his effort.]

Govind Ballabh did not play many games himself, but was fond of sports. He would watch others play, and at times, he was asked to act as a referee by his school-mates. It shows that his friends had faith in his judgment, sense of fairplay and impartiality. Govind loved walking and took to horse riding. In addition, he had a passion for music, which he retained even when he was grown up and studied in the college. He records in his diary, which he maintained while he was a student at Allahabad University, that every morning he used to practise music at least for half an hour.

He took part in debates in the school and formed a

debating society at Ramsay College Govind, along with a few friends, founded a secret society called Happy Club, where the members discussed politics of the day. The Happy Club was not a revolutionary society, but during those days political discussions were not encouraged by schools and colleges run by the British. Later, when he grew older, he participated in debates held at Almora Akhbar Building. He was a good debator. In the college, he excelled in this skill and was known for his eloquence and oratory full of persuasive arguments.

In 1899, Badri Dutt Joshi died, which was a great shock to the family and specially to Govind Ballabh Pant, who was deeply attached to him, and who had been his mentor and a source of inspiration. With the death of Joshi, the family fortunes also dwindled to an extent.

Occasionally, during these quiet days, some distinguished persons visited Almora and addressed public meetings. Among them were Swami Vivekananda, Motilal Nehru, Dr Bhagwan Das and Annie Besant.

You have, no doubt, heard the names of these great leaders. Swami Vivekananda was a great religious preacher who attended the Conference of World Religions in America in 1893. There he delivered speeches on the philosophical basis of Hinduism and greatness of Indian culture. The people of the West, who listened to him with great interest, were thrilled and began appreciating Indian culture. Swami Vivekananda was considered as the greatest exponent of Indian religious and philosophical texts. He instilled in Indians a sense of pride in the greatness of India and its culture.

Annie Besant was an Irish woman who joined the Theosophical Society in India and was deeply interested in Indian philosophy, religion and culture. She rose

to become an important leader of the Indian National Congress, which demanded freedom for India. She started the Home Rule League, demanding self-government for the Indian people. Motilal Nehru was an eminent leader of the Indian National Congress, a friend of Annie Besant, Mahatma Gandhi and other great men of his times, and a renowned lawyer. He was father of Jawaharlal Nehru. Dr. Bhagwan Das was a learned man and a philosopher. He lived in Benaras.

These great leaders inspired the young by their learning, wisdom, idealism, sincerity of purpose and patriotism. Govind was deeply moved by listening to them. He read on a wide range of subjects as a student in Almora. He also read through newspapers with care and discussed topics of interest with his friends. In 1905, he passed the Intermediate examination from Ramsay College, standing 20th in Kumaon, earning a scholarship of Rs. 20 per month. He would have done better in the examination had he not suffered from a heart attack in 1904, at the young age of seventeen. After passing the Intermediate examination, he went to Allahabad and joined Muir College. In the B.A. course he took mathematics, politics and English literature. Professor Cox, who taught mathematics, was attracted by him for his gifts in mathematics.

Allahabad University was one of the finest universities in India. There were only five universities in India then. They were Calcutta, Bombay, Madras, Panjab and Allahabad. Besides, Allahabad was the capital of Uttar Pradesh. It had a High Court and the legal profession was greatly valued. Eminent lawyers were members of the Allahabad Bar, among whom were Madan Mohan Malaviya, Motilal Nehru, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Sunderlal and a large number of public figures. All of them took part in the Indian struggle for freedom.

Govind Ballabh Pant took full advantage of this great opportunity of being a student in Allahabad. He studied hard, but also took part in all kinds of university campus activities

Allahabad was also a centre of political activity. In 1905, Lord Curzon, the Viceroy of India, partitioned Bengal in two parts on communal lines. East Bengal had a Muslim majority, whereas in West Bengal, Hindus were in majority. The partition of Bengal was considered by Indian people as a deliberate attempt on the part of the British government to destroy the unity of Indian people. Partition of Bengal was opposed by the entire nation. Numerous protest meetings, processions and demonstrations, were held in Calcutta and different towns of Bengal. Rakhi was exchanged between Hindus and Muslims as a bond of brotherhood and as a symbol of national unity. The song, *Bande Mataram*, which was prohibited by the government, was sung in every part of the country defying the government orders. People greeted each other with *Bande Mataram*. A beginning in Swadeshi movement was made in Bengal, when British goods were boycotted for the first time.

There was a lot of excitement in Allahabad and Govind Ballabh as a boy of eighteen was deeply influenced by these events. The annual session of the Indian National Congress was held at Benaras in December 1905. Gopal Krishna Gokhale, a member of the Central Legislative Council, was one of the most eminent leaders of the time, who presided over the Congress. Govind Ballabh attended the Congress session and served as a volunteer, in spite of his weak constitution. In 1907, Gokhale visited Allahabad again. A public meeting was held with Motilal Nehru in the chair. The entire community of students of Allahabad

University attended the meeting Govind Ballabh was one of them.

The same year, when the Kumbha Mela was held at Allahabad, he again volunteered for social service. The Congress used to organize such service to help millions of pilgrims who gathered for bathing in the *sangam* of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers. In the evenings, taking advantage of such large gathering of people, the Congress held meetings, and speeches were delivered, exhorting the people to unite against the British rule and fight for freedom. Govind Ballabh made a fiery speech at one of these gatherings and as a result, Principal Jennings of Muir College, issued orders debarring him from taking the examination. Principal Jennings was an Englishman who did not sympathise with Indian aspirations. This upset Govind Ballabh's preparation for his B A examination. His mathematics teacher, Prof. Cox, who was fond of him, intervened and appealed to the Principal to show leniency towards Govind Ballabh and he was finally allowed to appear in the examination. He passed his B A. examination in the second division.

Soon after, he joined the Law College, which was a part of Muir College itself. Eminent lawyers like Tej Bahadur Sapru and Mohan Lal Nehru were professors of law. Govind Ballabh was a brilliant student of law and stood first in the law examination in 1909, winning the Lumsden Gold Medal of Allahabad University.

During these formative years, he emerged as an all-rounder. He listened to the great leaders of Indian National Congress. He wrote in his diary about their visits to Allahabad University, and noted the names of Lala Lajpat Rai, Surendranath Banerjee, Rash Bihari Ghosh, and that he saw Gokhale from close quarters. Madan Mohan Malaviya was another great leader. He

founded Banaras Hindu University and started journals and newspapers for political awakening. Thus, Govind Ballabh's training in politics began, while he was still in the college

He also read widely. In addition to his subject of study, which was Law, he was attracted by the writings of great authors like Tolstoy, Maxim Gorky, Bacon, Emerson, James Mill and John Stuart Mill and other men of literature and science. At the same time, he did not forget reading through the *Rig Veda*, *Quran* and *Bible*, specially the Sermon on the Mount. He took pride in being an Indian and believed in the composite culture of India.

As has been said, Govind Ballabh maintained a diary, in which he recorded his thoughts and feelings everyday. Only a few diaries of his student days are available. It is interesting to read a page from his diary of February 1908, in which he made the following resolutions.

1. **I shall learn at least 15 new notes of music.**
2. **I shall practise truth and gentlemanliness.**
3. **I shall write loving letters—to dear ones.**
4. **I shall not smoke from today.**

He wrote about the books which he read, the lessons which he must complete, and many more matters of personal nature, including that he must take more care of his health.

It is obvious from the above story that Govind Ballabh had grown as a young man full of idealism and patriotism. His love for the motherland and the society which he decided to serve became deeper and deeper as he grew older. He was a handsome youth, six feet tall, with large eyes and a serene face. With his pleasing manners, he won everybody's friendship. He seldom of-

fended any of his friends in the school or college. He was a young man of great courage.

His life as a young man was rather sad. Yet, he faced life with great courage and strength of will. In spite of socio-religious reform movements and impact of Western ideas, Indian society in the nineteenth century continued to be orthodox in its attitude to social problems. Practices like child marriage were prevalent and children often at the age of ten or twelve were married. Govind Ballabh was married in 1899 at the age of twelve. In 1908, when he was about 21 years old and still studying at the college, Govind Ballabh became the father of a son. Within a few months, however, the child died and soon after his wife also expired.

These happenings were normal in those days. There were not many hospitals or qualified doctors. In small towns and hilly areas, the condition was even worse. The British government in India, being a foreign government, was interested in the collection of revenue and maintenance of law and order. It was not a welfare-oriented state. Disease, epidemic and famines ravaged many parts of India from time to time and millions of people died of cholera, small-pox, plague, malaria and influenza. Floods and droughts also took their heavy tolls. It is, therefore, no wonder that mortality among children and women was very high. In India today, the conditions are different. We are a modern nation. Application of science in agriculture and industry has brought prosperity to people. Medical facilities have reached literally every home. Education has transformed the people's attitudes to life. But the story of the Indian society of the last century was depressing.

Govind Ballabh was persuaded to marry again in 1912. In 1914, his wife gave birth to a son, but both of them died within a few months. You will notice, that

there was so much unhappiness in the life of young Govind Ballabh Pant. His father died of cholera in 1913 at the age of 46. His sister became a widow at a young age. In a few years he lost his mother also. Before her death, she persuaded Govind Ballabh to marry again. He remarried in 1916. Fortunately, from this marriage, three children were born; one of them Krishna Chandra Pant, is a Cabinet Minister at the Centre.

Govind Ballabh had suffered from a heart attack in 1904 when he was just a boy of 17. Although he recovered from the attack, he continued to complain of chest pain. In 1909, he fell from a horse. This caused him a serious injury, and the pain in the back never left him. In 1928, during the Simon Commission demonstration at Lucknow, he received lathi blows on the nape of his neck, and the back and shoulders. As a result, he suffered from pain in the neck and the back throughout his life. He narrowly escaped direct lathi blows on his head. If he had received one, he might have met with the same fate which awaited Lala Lajpat Rai. Lala Lajpat Rai died in 1928 as a result of lathi blows received during the Simon Commission agitation at Lahore. In spite of these mishaps, personal bereavements and sufferings, Govind Ballabh remained a cheerful man, maintaining a robust sense of humour and continued to perform his duties as a student with a sense of dedication. Indeed, these adversities made him a braver man and he pledged himself to serve his motherland with greater determination and devotion.

India is one country. The apparent variety in its culture, and diversity in its customs have always been beautifully and organically linked together. This bond of oneness has to be strengthened and developed.

CHAPTER 2

Entry into Public Life

Soon after obtaining the degree in law from Allahabad University, Govind Ballabh began practising law in Almora. Within a very short time, he was recognised as a most competent lawyer. His earnings increased every month. Within a few years he started earning about Rs 1000/- per month, which was then considered a big sum. During his student days, he had been an intelligent debator and was gifted with a strong memory. These qualities helped him in his profession. He did his home work thoroughly, mastering every point of law before going to the court. His presentation of the case, marshalling of facts and figures, his logical and persuasive arguments were superb. He won many cases.

Govind Ballabh was also a man of convictions. While practising law, he saw to it that he did not take up false cases. It is said that once, after winning a case on behalf of his client, he came to know that the whole case was fabricated by the client. He returned the entire amount of fee which he had charged.

While arguing a case at the Almora court, Govind Ballabh came in conflict with the English magistrate. He told the magistrate that he would not enter his court again, and began his practice at Kashipur. Once he

went to the court at Kashipur wearing khadi *kurtā* and *pyjama* and a khadi cap. The English judge asked Govind Ballabh to change his dress but he told him that he would rather leave the court

In another incident, an Englishman pushed aside the chair on which Govind Ballabh was sitting, taking tea, because Pant did not get up to greet the Englishman. He asked the Englishman to apologise for his insulting behaviour, otherwise he would have to do so in the court of law. Govind Ballabh told him that the entire crowd will be his witness. The Englishman, when he came to know that he was talking to Govind Ballabh Pant, apologised and left.

These incidents showed the kind of man he was fearless, upright and principled. He went round from one place to another on horseback and soon became popular with the people because of his honesty, hard work and patriotic fervour.

Before Mahatma Gandhi stormed the political scene as a national leader, Govind Ballabh Pant started taking part in the political affairs of hilly regions. In 1916, he set up Kumaon Parishad, which was a political organisation of the hill people. The main objective was to spread political awakening among them and solve the problems of Kumaon. He attended the Congress session held at Lucknow in 1916, where the Indian National Congress as well as the Muslim League held joint session. He represented Kumaon. He met Gandhiji for the first time there and was deeply influenced by him. Other leaders whom he met at Lucknow were Sarojini Naidu, Annie Besant and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Sarojini Naidu was a poetess and a great leader of the Congress. Tilak was the fiery leader of Maharashtra who had given the famous slogan to the Indian people: "Swaraj is my birth right and I shall have it".

In 1917, he persuaded Annie Besant to preside over the Kumaon Parishad. Within a year Gandhiji launched Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Acts, according to which, any Indian suspected of political or revolutionary activities would be tried in camera, and the accused would not be permitted the benefit of defence. Gandhiji declared that such laws violated the fundamental principles of justice, democracy and individual liberty, and smacked of racialism, since the acts were applicable to Indians only. He declared that these acts were "Black Acts" and asked the Government to withdraw them.

Following the call given by Gandhiji, for a nationwide hartal against the Black Acts, the whole country was politically mobilised. On 6 April 1919, a meeting was held at Kashipur where Govind Ballabh was the main speaker. The meeting demanded the withdrawal of the Rowlatt Acts. As a sequel to the movement against Rowlatt Acts, the Jallianwala massacre took place in Amritsar on the Vaisakhi day, 13 April 1919. All of you must have read about the ghastly tragedy of Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in which General Dyer had ordered uninterrupted firing on the peaceful meeting held there. The firing continued till the ammunition was exhausted, leaving many hundreds of men, women and children dead and thousands wounded. No medical help was provided to the wounded and Martial Law was proclaimed in the Punjab. Against these atrocities, the whole nation protested. As a consequence of these events, Indian National Congress decided to launch the Non-cooperation movement against the British rule, under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Govind Ballabh Pant was deeply moved by these events, and following Gandhiji's call, the hill regions also were drawn into the mainstream of nationalist

political agitation

Govind Ballabh moved from Almora to Kashipur for practice, but by 1916, he established himself at Nainital, where he had a flourishing practice. Within a few years, he planned to enrol himself as a member of the Allahabad Bar, which would enable him to practice at Allahabad High Court. But Gandhiji's influence dominated the Indian political scene after 1920, and most of the leaders of the Indian National Congress gave up their lucrative practice following his call for non-cooperation.

The most important legal case in which Govind Ballabh appeared as a defence counsel was the Kakori Conspiracy case of 1925. The revolutionary movement was also an important aspect of the Indian nationalist movement. Some of the young revolutionaries, who did not believe in the method of non-violence, preached and practised by Gandhiji and the Indian National Congress, decided to follow "the cult of bomb". Several incidents of violence were organised by them; they even tried to hurl bombs at important British officials including the Viceroy of India. They also derailed trains, and looted government treasury to finance their movement.

One such incident occurred on 9 August 1925, in which revolutionaries stopped the train coming from Saharanpur to Lucknow at a place near Kakori, and succeeded in removing the iron-chest carrying money, from the train. The Indian National Congress, under the leadership of Motilal Nehru, asked Govind Ballabh Pant to fight the case as a defence counsel on behalf of the revolutionaries. Pant skilfully and forcefully fought out their case, but there was no chance of saving these revolutionaries from death or jail sentences since the British government was determined to deal with revo-

lutionary crime with a heavy hand. One of the members of the Kakori Conspiracy was Chandra Shekhar Azad, who remained underground for a number of years till at last he was killed in police action in Alfred Park in Allahabad in 1931.

In Kashipur, while practising law, Govind Ballabh established several societies to promote social reform, literacy and political awakening. One such society, called Prem Sabha, was formed in 1914, for social reforms. In 1916, he was nominated to Notified Area Committee, and later became the Chairman of the Education Society of the Committee. During this period, he pushed through the plan for a free and compulsory elementary education for the children of Kumaon.

In 1916, he moved over to Nainital and established the Kumaon Parishad. The main purpose of the Parishad was to create political awakening against old social customs and injustice to which they were subjected.

One such custom was *coolie-begar*, according to which the villagers were forced to offer free labour to the British officers and other members of the administration like Commissioner, tahsildars, and police personnel, while they went on tour. Each village was expected to provide several labourers to carry the baggage and other touring kits of the officers for which they were paid nothing. This was a feudal practice, which was opposed by Govind Ballabh tooth and nail and he organised a movement against it. In 1921, during the Non-cooperation movement, nearly 15,000 persons assembled at Bageshwar, where he and other leaders asked the people not to offer free labour to the British or any officer of the government. The entire gathering took a solemn vow not to offer *coolie-begar*. In 1923, some villagers from Almora district moved the Allahabad

High Court, praying that free *coolie-begar* should be stopped, and they won the case. Yet, the practice continued though some payment was made by officers to the labour. It was Govind Ballabh Pant, who as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, finally stopped the practice by law

Another problem which the people of Kumaon faced related to the use of wood from forests. Most of the hills provided plenty of wood for construction of houses as well as for fuel. During the period, we must remember, electricity was not available in villages. Even coal supply was limited. It had to be transported from the plains. The entire region was very cold during winter. Wood was used extensively in these areas as fuel for cooking and keeping the house warm. With the coming of the British, most of the forests of Kumaon were declared as reserved forests, so that cutting of wood, grazing of cattle was banned. The people as a consequence suffered. Govind Ballabh prepared an informative document on the "Forest Problems of Kumaon" and advocated that, while protection of the forest areas should be the duty of all concerned, the people of Kumaon should be permitted to collect

1. dry wood and grass from the forest adjoining the boundaries of the villages,
2. that there should be no ban on hunting,
3. and the government should permit the people to obtain weapons for protection of their crops and their life.

While advocating the above demands Govind Ballabh argued that unless some alternative source of energy for lighting, cooking and for warming homes was found, it was unreasonable to entirely ban the cutting of

wood and collection of dry wood from the forest areas. By espousing these causes, he enhanced his reputation as a leader of vision and a man of action, and he became the undisputed leader of the Kumaon people. In 1920, when he fought an election to the U P Legislative Council, he was defeated by the rival candidate only by 33 votes, but in 1924, when he sought an election to the same Legislative Council as a Swaraj Party candidate, he was elected by an overwhelming majority, scoring more than 96 per cent of the total votes cast.

Let us not shirk from the path of non-violence, which has worked wonders. Do not forget the splendid awakening and supreme sacrifice which this weapon of non-violence has set before the world Have faith in its potency and do not betray any weakness in a moment of anger.

CHAPTER 3

Influence of Gandhiji

All of you must have read something about Gandhiji. Some of you may have seen the film *Gandhi* directed by Attenborough. It has been considered a great film and was shown in cinema houses in all parts of the country about two years ago. Gandhiji is known as the Father of the Nation. Rabindranath Tagore, the great poet, called him 'Mahatma', the great soul. Many of Gandhiji's contemporaries affectionately addressed him as 'Bapu'.

Gandhiji was by all standards one of the greatest men born in our country and the world. He was a remarkable person. He led a simple, pure and pious life devoid of untruth, and espoused great causes which affected the society and humanity at large. He was utterly selfless, totally devoted to the task of national reconstruction, was committed to truth, non-violence, and set a personal example of morality in private and public conduct. Politics under his leadership became ethical, it was not a game for power seekers. He led a powerful movement for national liberation and brought about social regeneration of India.

In 1921, when the Non-cooperation movement against the British rule was started by Gandhiji, millions of peasants, workers, artisans, from all parts of the country participated. People from other classes like pro-

professionals, educationists, lawyers also followed him. The movement truly became a mass movement under the leadership of Gandhiji. He wanted the movement to remain non-violent and peaceful, in spite of the atrocities perpetrated by the government on the people. Lakhs of people were put into jail. Property and houses of several thousand persons were attacked by the government.

The movement, however, had at places become violent and at Chauri Chaura, in Gorakhpur district, the crowd surrounded a police station and set it on fire, killing a few policemen, who were inside the building. Gandhiji withdrew the movement after this incident. Many leaders criticised Gandhiji for this, but he continued to maintain that the movement led by him must remain non-violent and peaceful.

In 1929, he launched yet another mass movement against the British rule. The movement was seemingly against the imposition of salt tax. But the main purpose was to show to the people of India that the British rule was unjust, callous and, therefore, must be overthrown. He declared that salt, like air and water was a product of nature, and was born out of the Indian soil, and the taxes imposed on this basic necessity of life, which every Indian, rich or poor, used, was "unethical" and that the tax was "iniquitous" and must be withdrawn. Otherwise, he declared he would break the salt laws by manufacturing salt himself. The famous Dandi March, as you know, led by him, was undertaken. He walked from Sabarmati Ashram covering 200 miles and reached Dandi on the coast of Bombay and broke the salt law. Millions of Indians did the same in other parts of the country and that transformed the whole country into one rebel camp against the British.

Gandhiji had identified himself with the poor. He

lived in a thatched mud hut in the ashram named Sevagram in Wardha and wore only a loin cloth, just as the poor people of India did. And he set an example of sacrifice, suffering, truthfulness and dignified conduct. His followers came from all classes and communities. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs all appreciated his leadership. He was deeply religious but believed in the greatness of all religions and believed in the cultural oneness of India. He was a true Indian and the greatest among them.

During the nationalist movement, Gandhiji was able to gather around him some of the great men and women of India. Every province, every city, every district, town and village in India produced its heroes during this epic period.

It was Gandhiji who was the first person to impress on his countrymen that India could not make progress if villages remained backward and poor. More than 80 per cent of the population of India lived in villages, he declared, and unless the quality of life in the villages was improved, the nation would not be able to march forward. He worked, therefore, incessantly for village uplift; drew out a plan for the growth of village handicrafts and cottage industries; adopted *charkha* for weaving, and through these measures, he hoped that the weak, the down-trodden and the untouchables, would begin to eke out a respectable living for themselves. What was most important, he said, this would instil in them a sense of pride in their own skills and train them to become self-reliant; and in the process a new awareness for eventual social resurgence of India would emerge.

The influence of Gandhiji on Govind Ballabh Pant became manifest from the beginning of his contact with him. The entire nation had supported the non-violent,

Non-cooperation movement offered by Gandhiji Govind Ballabh participated in the Non-cooperation movement as a soldier of freedom. Also, his ideas and approach to rural development, through the growth of cottage industries, establishment of national system of education, and programme for social uplift of the untouchables, appealed to him and he followed Gandhiji. Like Gandhiji, he also led an extremely simple, pious and honest life. He moulded his conduct on the lines which Gandhiji had taught millions of men and women of his times.

During the Non-cooperation movement of 1921-22, Govind Ballabh Pant organized political movement in the Kumaon region. During the Salt Satyagraha in 1930-31, several meetings were held under his leadership and salt was manufactured. The action taken was symbolic, since salt could not be manufactured on the hills. The main aim was to defy the salt laws. Series of arrests were made by the British in the Kumaon region and Govind Ballabh was sentenced and imprisoned for leading satyagraha movement in these regions.

In 1921, Govind Ballabh was elected Chairman of the Nainital District Board in addition to being a member of Kashipur Municipal Board. During this period, he put forward a plan for establishing schools in rural areas, advocating free and compulsory primary education for all children. Also, he wanted that books and slates, etc. should be given to the children of the schools free of cost. Another programme which he wanted the government to adopt related to the promotion of cottage industries. Later, when he became the Chairman of Kumaon Parishad, he asked the government to establish Panchayat in each village for resolving disputes and to initiate measures for rural development. He also wanted that the Parishad should

undertake series of measures for "industrial, commercial and national education" in Kumaon. A vocational school was established at Kashipur by Govind Ballabh to impart training in skills and finally he demanded that use of drinks in the rural regions should be stopped.

When he became a member of the U P Legislature, he supported the District Board Primary Education Bill introduced by the government. The programme was the same which had been advocated earlier by him. He also brought forward a bill in 1925 for the development of rural areas in U P.

The untouchables, called Harijans by Gandhiji, were not treated properly by the high-caste Hindus, although the Harijans were Hindus themselves. They were not allowed to draw water from the wells used by the high-caste Hindus. Similarly, they were not allowed to worship in the temples. Govind Ballabh organized a Conference at Almora on 10 November 1932, called "Kurmanchal Samaj Sammelan". At this Conference, a community kitchen was organized in which the Harijans were asked to cook meals. All those who attended the Sammelan under the leadership of Govind Ballabh, ate food cooked and served by the Harijans. Similarly, he led the Harijans to enter temples. For the first time they were permitted entry into the Murli Manohar Temple at Almora.

Thus, it will be seen from the above account of Govind Ballabh's activities that he proved to be a true follower of Gandhiji and the Indian National Congress, which had adopted these programmes as part of national reconstruction of India.

Under the Non-cooperation programme, as devised by Gandhiji, the courts and schools were boycotted; national schools were started; khadi was spun

and khadi clothes were worn by nationalist Indians. British goods and clothes were burnt in the bonfires and "swadeshi" became an act of faith for all Congressmen. Govind Ballabh followed these programmes as a true follower of Gandhiji, in letter and spirit he became a true Gandhian.

The history of India is the common heritage of all Indians born of common ancestors. Hindus and Muslims are equally entitled to share the pride of the glorious past of this great country. It is true that their religions differ but they have drawn their sustenance from the same soil for many a millenium.

—21 December 1946

Ours is a secular State. This solemn declaration . . . forms an integral part of our Constitution. There can be no difference in our State between man and man on account of religion, creed, caste or other similar considerations. It is the privilege of everyone to serve the nation . . . so that every citizen, whatever his faith, may live in peace and may have full opportunity to develop his personality . . . and to enjoy his full share of the privileges, amenities and comforts that our State can provide.

—27 February 1950

CHAPTER 4

Vision of Rural India

India was both a manufacturing as well as an agricultural country. The manufactured goods were produced in the villages as cottage industries. Indian agriculture was dependent mostly on the rains during the monsoon season. Irrigational canals were not many and there were few dams constructed by the British. Every home in the village, therefore, was free from farming activities for nearly six months in a year. Every village home, therefore, devoted itself to manufacture of cloth and production of different kinds of handicrafts, which were sold in the market. Thus every peasant home supplemented its income by producing some articles for sale.

The British, after gaining political power as rulers of India, allowed their merchants and trading concerns to invest money in manufactures in India and forced the artisans to sell their goods and raw materials to them often below the market rates. The Indian manufacturers and the cottage industries suffered losses and after sometime, the villages stopped manufacturing items like silk and cotton goods, for which they were once famous, and which had helped them for centuries to supplement their income from farming.

The cottage industries and handicrafts were thus destroyed by such a rapacious British policy. The villagers lost their position as manufacturers of goods and became merely producers of agricultural goods like rice, wheat, cotton and sugarcane, etc. India was reduced from a manufacturing to a purely agricultural country. This was one of the causes of poverty of India during the British rule.

The factories of England needed a lot of raw materials like cotton, jute and other goods. India became a supplier of these raw materials. The agents of British firms purchased raw cotton at a cheaper rate in India, transported it to Great Britain for manufacture of cloth and brought the manufactured goods back to India for sale. Thus they reaped advantage on both counts. On the one hand, they received continuous supply of raw materials, purchased at a much lower rate than the world market, and on the other, they got a ready market for their manufactures and made enormous profits.

Such an economic policy ruined the industries of India and the villages became poorer and poorer as time passed. The peasants did not have any other occupation than to cultivate the soil for their own living. Hence, they rushed for acquiring more land. Land being scarce, there was competition for land among the people engaged in agriculture. As a consequence, the rent on the cultivable soil was raised by the landlords. Such a development gave rise to exploitation of the peasantry.

In Uttar Pradesh, after the revolt of 1857, in which a large number of peasants participated, the British thought it advisable to create more landlords who would remain loyal to them. These landlords were known as *taluqdars* in the Avadh region, and *zamindars* in Agra, Mathura, Allahabad, Gorakhpur, etc.

Nearly 66 per cent of land was given away to these big landlords, who paid revenue to the government after collecting rents from the peasants. The landlords' revenue demand was fixed by the government, but the rent to be paid by the tenants was not fixed. It fluctuated according to the demand for land. In actual fact, the rent demanded by the landlords increased each time an agreement was reached between the landlords and tenants or peasants.

The peasants or tenants paid rent to these *taluqdars* or *zamindars*. There were several kinds of tenants. Some of them were called hereditary tenants, who cultivated their lands for life as long as they paid the required amount of rent to the landlords. They could not be evicted from land because they had hereditary claim on these lands. The second type of peasants were called "occupancy tenants", whose rent was regulated after 10 or 12 years in the non-*talugdari* areas and after seven years or so in the *talugdari* areas. Each time, i.e. after seven or 10-12 years, the rent was raised although these tenants were permitted to cultivate land on payment of the rents. They had no permanent rights over the land they cultivated. They could be thrown out of their land for non-payment of rent. There were also other kinds of tenants, who moved from one village to the other and could be evicted at the pleasure and sweet will of the landlords. On the whole, you can see that these tenants were not secure in their possession of land, and most of them could be turned out from their soil by the landlords, although they were the most important elements in the production process. Without their labour nothing could be produced.

Secondly, these peasants or tenants were subjected to payment of various kinds of dues or cesses, which were demanded by the landlords from time to time. For

example, they paid either in kind or money a cess called *nazarana* to the landlords at festivals, marriages, etc. When the *taluqdars* bought an elephant, they paid a cess called *hathiana*. When they purchased a car, they paid a cess called *motorana*. These were illegal practices. In addition, the tenants worked in the landlords' fields as free labour (*begar*) for a number of days in a year. As a result of these exactions, there was great discontent among the peasantry in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, the peasants became poorer through their burdens and they merely survived somehow. In addition to the *zamindar's* exactions, the village money-lenders plundered them by demanding high interest on the loans they asked for. The villagers, thus, by and large, remained in perpetual debt. The "rural indebtedness", as it is termed, has been a chronic phenomenon of British land policy in India.

In 1920-21, in Rai Bareilly, Pratapgarh and Faizabad districts of Avadh, wide-spread disturbances took place, during which the landlords and their agents were attacked. The moneylenders also did not escape their anger. Their houses were burnt, shops were looted and the government had to open fire on the peasants. It was against this background that the Indian National Congress demanded passing of legislation for the protection of the peasantry from oppression and exploitation by the landlords.

The most important issue before the government, was to grant security of tenure or rights over land to the tenants, or peasants, or *ryots*, as they were called. In the Agra region, the problem was to ensure the tenants' occupancy rights after ten or twelve years of cultivation and to fix the rent demand on a rational basis. By custom, 40 per cent of gross produce, or its equivalent amount in money, was taken as rent but that was too high a demand, and the rent needed to be lowered.

Also, law had to be passed to curb the powers of landlords regarding the eviction of tenants from land. In addition to these, illegal cesses or feudal dues demanded from the tenants, as was the practice in the *taluqdari* regions in Avadh, had to be stopped

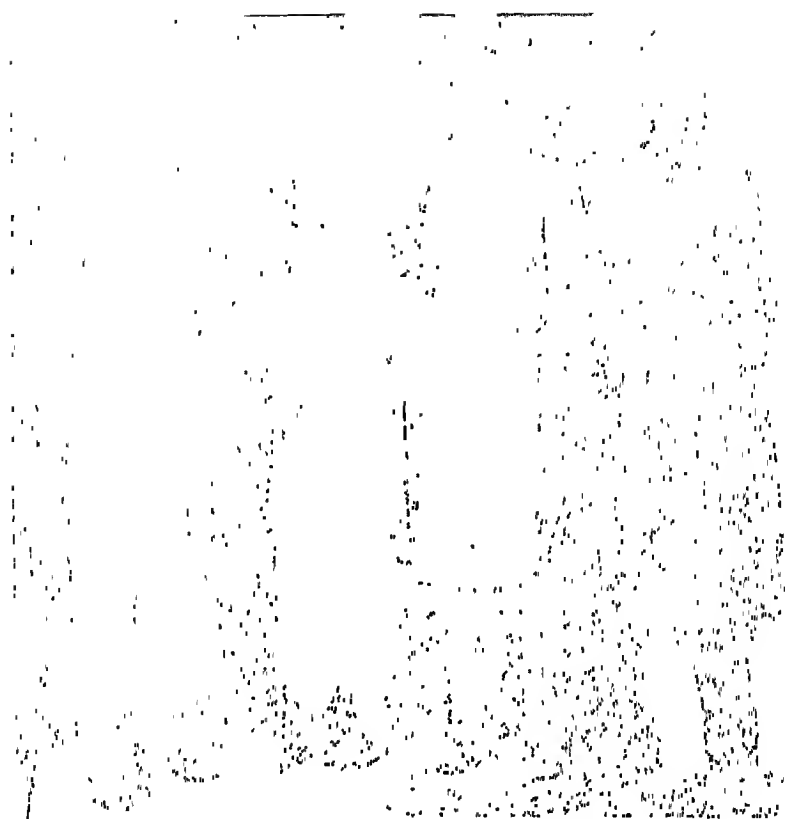
The Avadh Tenancy Act of 1921 tried to mitigate some of these evils by prohibiting the landlords from demanding dues other than rent, and granting rights to the cultivators to till the land for seven years. Govind Ballabh Pant, as Member of the U.P. Legislative Council, representing the Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress, strongly supported the cause of the peasantry and demanded restriction of powers of the landlords over the peasantry in general. He also supported the Agra Tenancy Act of 1926, passed by the U.P. Legislative Council, which sought to guarantee security of tenure to the occupancy tenants. These measures were rather half-hearted attempts on the part of the government to provide justice to the peasants, since the government was not prepared to annoy the landlords.

Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian National Congress sought to create essential conditions so that the rural areas flourished and prospered. This could be achieved, Nehru declared, if rights of ownership to all tenants were granted, so that these small peasants could remain secure in their lands and their households, and were free from feudal burdens. The rights of ownership meant that the peasants would be able to sell, transfer, or mortgage their lands as they wished. Also, peasants would be free to cultivate his soil and produce whatever crops he wished to produce in his land. In many villages, as has been seen, especially in Bihar, peasants were forced to undertake indigo cultivation against their wishes, which had resulted in

oppression. It was against this practice that Gandhiji had started his first campaign at Champaran in Bihar. Similarly, in U.P., the government sometimes imposed conditions that certain areas should be earmarked to produce cotton and sugarcane, etc. according to the market demand. This happened specially in the nineteenth century.

The problem of granting ownership rights to peasantry, in spite of the movement of Indian National Congress, was not resolved as long as the British remained in power in India. It was only after independence that right of ownership over their lands were granted to all peasants under Govind Ballabh Pant's Chief Ministership. During the 1930's, the Indian National Congress led by Jawaharlal Nehru also had demanded that the zamindari system should be abolished. It was rightly asserted that only after the abolition of the zamindari system, full security of tenure could be granted to the peasantry. When India became independent, most of the States in India passed laws abolishing the zamindari system.

We have to build a network of canals and wells so that not an inch of cultivable space is left uncultivated for want of irrigation; we have to build vast flood protection weirs, reservoirs and dams to save the people from recurrent distress and agony; we have to build roads ... to connect every village to the other ... We have to provide houses for all ... not only in the towns and cities but also in rural areas ... We have to industrialize the country, set up basic industries that can build aircrafts, modern machines and things on which the life of a civilized nation so much depends.



Some of Congress and Muslim League leaders who attended the Simla Conference in June 1945 *from the left*—Govind Ballabh Pant, M A Jinnah, C Rajagopalachari. Abul Kalam Azad stands last in the row

During the period of national movement, the abolition of zamindari system became an important issue but it was not rigorously advocated as a matter of policy by the Congress; mainly because it was feared that the zamindars as a class might support the government. The Congress policy was to unite all classes and communities against the British Raj. Mahatma Gandhi declared that all sections of Indians must fight the

“most powerful zamindar” of the country, i.e. the British government in India. It was felt that zamindars should not be alienated on the issue of the zamindari at this phase of national struggle for freedom. Otherwise, a class war would ensue, which would provide an opportunity to the government to divide Indians further. Gandhiji observed that all Indians must unitedly fight first and foremost for independence of India. Govind Ballabh Pant also fell into this line of thinking and advocated that through legislation the rights of peasants should be protected and guaranteed.

During 1930-34 the prices of agricultural produce fell. An acute economic depression prevailed in the whole country and the world. As a result of fall in the prices of rice, wheat, pulses, cotton and sugarcane, etc., the peasants of U.P. suffered great losses. It became very difficult for them to pay the rent to the landlords. Even the *zamindars* and *taluqdars* were unable to pay the land revenue demanded by the government, because they could not collect rents from the peasants. Under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Purushottam Das Tandon and other leaders of the Indian National Congress, including Govind Ballabh Pant, a “no-rent campaign” was started, and after a lot of agitation and negotiations with the government, remissions from payment of rent were granted to the peasantry. It was indeed one of the great achievements of Indian National Congress that during the period between 1931 and 1933, rent amounting to nearly ten crores of rupees was remitted by the government. The benefits of remission also were reaped by the landlords and about three crores of rupees of revenue was not demanded from them by the government. This was possible mainly because of excellent survey carried out by a team headed by Govind Ballabh Pant, on the basis of which the re-



Front V K Krishna Menon, Govind Ballabh Pant, Dr Radhakrishnan, Dr Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru

We have to carry the torch of light to every home and hamlet and to ensure the fullest opportunity for the social, economic and cultural progress of all who reside in this land. The interests of the masses must necessarily receive the foremost consideration in every plan of reconstruction . . .

Most of our people live in villages and our bold peasantry will be our real pride. We aim at making every farmer intrepid, self-respecting, prosperous . . . With this object in view we have decided to abolish the obsolete agrarian system . . .

—15 August 1947

missions were granted. The report he submitted was entitled "Agrarian Distress in U.P."

Later when Govind Ballabh Pant became Premier of U.P. in 1937-38 and Chief Minister from 1946-1954, series of laws were passed granting full rights to the peasants. During his Chief Ministership, several measures for rural development were initiated. The zamindari system was abolished and land reforms were introduced. Govind Ballabh Pant's vision of rural India was for creating suitable social and legal climate in which peasantry would be prosperous and Indian urban centres would be surrounded by flourishing countryside. With this aim in view, he was determined to make the peasants fully secure in their possessions of land. With the dawn of freedom, an all-out drive was made to encourage village industries including handicrafts. A regeneration of the economy was on the agenda, and series of welfare programmes were initiated for rural uplift. The rural development programme under Govind Ballabh Pant became for the first time an important plank of government policy. In addition, new schemes for irrigation were launched. Research centres for production of better variety of rice, wheat, pulses and maize were started. Villages were linked up with market centres through a network of new roads. Programme of rural electrification was taken up. Rural banks for providing loans to the peasants were started. More schools and colleges were opened for creating an infrastructure for social and economic development. Several steps were taken to usher in social and economic transformation of the villages of U.P. This was a signal contribution of Govind Ballabh Pant as Chief Minister of U.P.

CHAPTER 5

A National Leader

By 1930, Govind Ballabh Pant was recognised as the most eminent leader of national movement in U.P. He worked with great leaders of U P like Purushottam Das Tandon, T.T.K. Sherwani, Sri Prakasa, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, and others. He had come into close contact with Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru, Sarojini Naidu, Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Sardar Patel, who were outstanding leaders at the national level. They all appreciated Pant's qualities of leadership. His complete dedication to national cause, which was to achieve independence for India, was recognized. Everyone was impressed by his patriotism, his faith in the composite culture of India and complete loyalty to the Indian National Congress, its ideals and programmes. Pant proved to be an Indian first and last. He was untouched by any trace of communalism in his personal or public behaviour. Like the Congress, he was determined to remove untouchability which he considered as a curse for the Hindus.

He also emerged as the undisputed leader of Kumaon through his constructive political programmes. By his advocacy of abolition of the *coolie-begar* system, or fight for the rights of the people for the use of

grazing lands in forest areas, or collection of fire wood from forests, or promotion of primary and elementary system of education for the people, he had endeared himself to the people of Kumaon. Also, he had brought the people of Kumaon hills into the mainstream of nationalist movement. He had steadfastly supported the cause of untouchables and had succeeded in opening the doors of temples to them. In schools, public places, they were welcomed mainly through the efforts of Govind Ballabh Pant and his devoted followers of the Congress programme.

During 1920-22 he had organized the people in favour of the Non-cooperation movement. Similarly, in 1930-31, when Civil Disobedience movement started, following Salt Satyagraha, wide-spread support was ensured through his leadership. His fame as a great organiser and political leader had already spread beyond the confines of Kumaon and U.P. by this time.

He was elected member of the All India Congress Committee and he rose to be a member of the Congress Working Committee, which was the supreme policy making body of the Congress. The Congress Working Committee, consisting of top Congress leaders of the country took decisions on political matters. The plan of action in respect of launching of mass movements against the British rule and all organisational details were chalked out by this Committee. Negotiations with the government of India or provincial governments were carried out through the Congress Working Committee or by the representatives nominated by it. In 1945, Govind Ballabh participated in the Simla Conference, where the Viceroy and his Executive Council, representing the British government, were to discuss issues pertaining to the eventual transfer of power to India.

He also proved to be a great parliamentarian. He



Jawaharlal Nehru with Govind Ballabh Pant and V.K. Krishna Menon

We, Indians, are proud of the fact that there was a time when our country led the world We want that we ... should again rise in the international field—rise to a height which gains the appreciation of the world.

was elected to the U.P. Legislative Council in 1924. In 1926, he was re-elected to the Council and became the leader of opposition, representing Swaraj Party of the Indian National Congress in the Council.

It is important to remember that between 1919 and 1935, what was called a dyarchical form of government existed in the provinces. According to this scheme, the Governor of the province was assisted by an Executive Council and Council of Ministers. The Executive Council was in charge of the Reserved Subjects and the Council of Ministers of the Transferred Subjects. All important matters relating to administration of the provinces like land revenue, finance, law and order were Reserved Subjects, which were under the control of the Executive Council, consisting of British officials of the government. The Transferred Subjects were under ministers, most of whom were Indians. They were members of the Provincial Legislature, but they were not responsible to the Legislature. They functioned as ministers at the pleasure of the Governor, who was an Englishman. This system of government did not promote responsible government.

There were also a number of shortcomings in the composition and working of the legislature. The majority in the legislature belonged to the British officials and their supporters, most of whom were elected from communal and class electorates. You know, the British had decided to grant separate electorates on the basis of religion and property qualifications. As a result, landlords, orthodox Muslims, etc. were elected to the Council. The Congress had opposed the principle of separate electorates on the ground that India was one country and divisions on the basis of community, class and religion should not be recognized.

Under the circumstances, the legislatures were not

truly representative of the people. The role of the Indian representatives as Swaraj Party members, therefore, became limited. The Indian National Congress under the Non-cooperation programme had boycotted these elections. But after the withdrawal of the movement in 1922 by Gandhiji, a section of the Congress under the leadership of Motilal Nehru and C.R. Das, decided to fight the election so that they could defeat the representatives of the British government and their programmes in the Legislature. This section of the Congress was called the Swaraj Party. The representatives of the Swaraj Party swept the polls in 1924. That is how Govind Ballabh Pant was elected to U.P. Legislative Council from Kumaon.

The Swaraj Party had decided to enter the Council also with a view to what they called "wrecking the government from within". They knew well that their ideas, views and opinions expressed on the floor of the Legislature will not prevail since the majority in the Legislature lay with the officials and the government. Still they thought by their opposition to the government and their measures from inside the Legislature, they would impress upon them that the British were ruling India against the wishes of Indians. They also wanted to impress the British government and the British Parliament that Indians were capable and extremely well-versed in parliamentary system of government and that they should be granted independence at the earliest.

From the start, Govind Ballabh Pant showed complete command over parliamentary practice and procedure and the government had to face delicate situation whenever he intervened in the debates or spoke on any bill at the Council. He studied the bills and resolutions of the government with care and thoroughness. Through excellent debating skills he was able to put

forward the point of view of the Congress and his own with great authority. He also scored many points against the government. The government benches recognised Pant's command over facts and figures and his mastery on financial bills, tenancy laws and other matters relating to administration in general. In addition to his oratorical accomplishments, he proved to be persuasive in his arguments, logical in his reasoning and constructive in his suggestions. His command over English and legal subtleties truly amazed his opponents, both British and Indians alike. Many of them inwardly agreed with his viewpoints, but would not openly support him on the floor of the House as they said so later.

As long as he was in the Legislative Council, he was the most eloquent and effective leader of the opposition. In 1934, he was elected to the Central Legislative Assembly, and in 1935 was elected deputy leader of the Congress Party in the Central Assembly. Both at the central and the provincial legislatures he came out in flying colours as a parliamentarian. He stoutly championed the cause of India, opposed the government policy of dividing Indians on communal lines, exposed the weaknesses of the government's economic policy, which led to exploitation of Indians as a whole and the weaker sections of Indian people in particular.

* * * * *

In the national movement under the leadership of Gandhiji, people from all walks of life participated. From 1920-21 onwards, beginning with Non-cooperation movement, till India achieved independence in 1947, series of mass movements were launched by Gandhiji. In 1930-31 the Civil Disobedience movement was started with Salt Satyagraha. After a decade, in

1942, Quit India movement was started and the British were asked to leave India. In the national movement, all parties, with different political ideologies, participated. The revolutionaries and others contributed to the movement. Lakhs of people were sent to jail Houses and properties of thousands of Indians were attached by the government.

Govind Ballabh Pant was sentenced to six months' imprisonment for taking part in Salt Satyagraha in 1930. In 1931 and 1932, he was jailed again In November 1940, he was sentenced to one year imprisonment for offering individual satyagraha and kept in Almora jail. He was released in November 1941. On 9 August 1942, as you all know, the Quit India movement began All leaders of the Indian National Congress including Pant were arrested on that day and put into jails in different parts of the country. At Ahmednagar Fort some of the eminent leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru, Maulana Azad, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Vallabhbhai Patel, Acharya Narendra Deva and Govind Ballabh Pant were kept. After the arrest of the leaders, people became leaderless and they themselves took up the reins of the

As in the old fable, no limb of the body could be separated or weakened without hurting the rest, so is the well-being of all parts of India indissolubly inter-connected. India has seen a continuous process of wholesome synthesis and assimilation not only on the racial but also on the ethical, social and aesthetic planes ... Every Indian can legitimately find heartening hope and dignity in this our common heritage.

movement. Wide-spread disturbances in all parts of the country took place. The government had to use the army to control them. Administrative machinery broke down. In places, bombing was resorted to. It was estimated that more than 10,000 people were killed; villages after villages were burnt down. Police and army ruthlessly suppressed the movement.

Govind Ballabh Pant was released on medical grounds on 31 March 1945, after nearly three years. Other leaders were also released in May-June 1945.

Most of these great leaders of national movement had spent a number of years in prisons. Jawaharlal Nehru spent nearly ten years between 1920 and 1945 in different jails. Stories of their hardship and courage; despair and cheerfulness and yet how well they occupied their time in the jails have been written by Jawaharlal Nehru in his famous book, *The Discovery of India*. He wrote it while in imprisonment in Ahmednagar Fort, between 1942 and 1945. Earlier he had written an equally popular book, *An Autobiography*, which was published in 1936. These are great writings and tell us the story of those stirring times when Indians as a nation fought for independence in a peaceful, non-violent manner under Gandhiji's leadership.

Every student should try to read the story of this non-violent national struggle. It is a remarkable story characterized by heroism, strong nationalistic spirit of the common man and their leaders. Their deep concern for the weak and poor, and complete lack of bitterness against the people of England show the greatness of these leaders of our national movement. They were determined to bring about social, economic and cultural resurgence of India when India became independent. They stood for the nation, not for their selfish ends.

When India achieved freedom, the Indian National

Congress inevitably became the leading national party, which was voted to power by the people. Govind Ballabh Pant was the foremost leader of the Congress Party in U.P. and became the Chief Minister of U.P. on April 1, 1946 and continued to hold this position till the end of 1954 for eight long years. He laid the foundation of a modern, forward-looking state, wedded to the task of socio-economic transformation. In 1955, he was invited to join the Central Cabinet by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India. Nehru needed Pant to help him as Home Minister. Pant's vast experience in administration and political wisdom now had to be used for national reconstruction.

Language is no doubt a powerful factor ... It is not only means of communication but it reflects the culture and the character of the people. So, we have to attach sufficient importance to it. But language can also be a dividing factor. If we are cut away from each other and if we think of our language alone ... then, instead of serving the cause of unification and advancement, languages become a source of disruption.

CHAPTER 6

Letters from Prison

Govind Ballabh Pant was lodged in Ahmednagar Fort jail for nearly three years, between 1942 and 1945. He wrote from the prison loving letters to his children, who were quite young and were then studying in schools. Lakshmi, the eldest of Pant's children, was born in July 1928. Krishna Chandra was born in August 1931, and Pushpa in December 1934. In 1942, they were 14 years, 11 years and eight years in age, respectively. The children missed their father. So did Govind Ballabh Pant his children. The only way of communication between them was through letters. As a rule, the children wrote to the father on the 15th and the 30th of every month, and father did so soon after receiving the letters from his children.

These letters are extremely interesting and display great love of the father for them, his deep concern for their education and their health. Govind Ballabh Pant also wanted, through letters, to make them aware of the values which they should learn while in school. He wanted his children to be "healthy, proud, beautiful, clever, gentle, religious and patriotic". He wanted to make them conscious of the greatness of Indian culture, its arts, literature and great contributions that India had made to the world of thought and civilization in general.

At the same time, through his letters, he tried to give some practical guidance as to how to do home work, how to take the examination, how to occupy one's leisure hours and how to spend holidays

He asked his children to maintain regular habits and balance their time between study and play. Above all, he asked them to maintain cheerfulness in all situations and develop a sense of humour. These qualities, he said, would make them become great in future and also make them friendly with everybody around.

While advising them in respect of examination, he asked his children not to worry too much about the examinations. He gave them confidence by saying: "You are sure to get through with credit, and as I have already written, your success in every undertaking is assured, if one faces the situation with undisturbed peace of mind and concentrated attention. You possess these qualities and will have their benefit in the present and also in the future". In another letter, he gave practical hints on how to solve the questions at the examination. It is interesting to read them. He wrote: "Do not be perturbed even if you find the question paper hard on your first reading. Nervousness has an upsetting influence. Calm composure is sure guarantee of success. So do not get confused or perplexed in any circumstances. Read the paper with undivided attention more than once, at least twice, before you start writing on your answer book. You need not begin till you have fully and precisely understood the questions. After you have made a careful scrutiny of the questions you will be able to make a rough estimate of the time that should be assigned to each. Divide the time accordingly and go ahead. Write your answers clearly in good, bold and in correct language. If necessary make rough notes before putting down final answers. See that everything is done

neatly and no word or line has a shabby look”

He advised them to be active, buoyant and never to be depressed. He wrote. “Cultivate cheerfulness and be never downhearted. Nothing is gained by depression or gloom. He who keeps cheerful invariably does his work well and finds pleasure in doing it. His company is sought by others and he wins the esteem and confidence of his comrades. A ready smile is a great asset. Who goes about with a cheerful face introduces joy wherever he enters. Good humour and sound health are close companions, and if one acquires one, the other follows. So keep your spirit high and do good and be good. Bear this in mind when you prepare your programme for your holidays”.

Similarly, in another letter, writing during the Christmas time, when normally the hills were covered with snow, he explained how beautiful was nature and how it was good to love nature and the environment. He also asked them to watch birds, recognize trees, flowers, which are grown during different seasons in the year and asked the children to devote some time to gardening. And he said: “Even if you have no land for gardens near your house and it is not convenient to do so at a different or distant place, you might, if you so choose, try some flower pots.” He described the snow-fall imagining the beauty of the lovely sight. “So you had the pleasure of witnessing a snowfall on the 16th. What a lovely sight! Snow flakes drop down gently like delicate petals from a celestial tree in the sky. The surface of the earth is wrapped up in a pure sheet of white. Nothing else is visible for miles round you. Even the trees put on a new garb. One does not feel the cold under the sleek freshness of this glorious feat of Nature . . .”

Again he asked his children to develop interest in Nature: “Many educated people do not know even the

names of the trees and the birds they see every morning and evening! It is not enough to have eyes or ears; one must know how to use them. Otherwise, as the proverb goes, there are those who have eyes but will not see, have ears but will not hear. We have laid out a sort of a flower garden here. Many and varied are the shapes and forms of the flowers. As to their colours one feels amazed by their richness and variety. Nature alone is capable of producing such marvellous crop. It is a fine, exhilarating pastime."

In addition to these friendly exchanges of information between the children and the father, in which father himself informed the children about the garden in jail, the flower-beds, the birds and the trees he watched in Ahmednagar Fort, he also talked about the books their father read and the books which possibly the children could read. In this connection he suggested Lewis Carroll's book *Alice in the Wonderland*, Jules Verne's *Around the World in Eighty Days*. These books, he said, would be entertaining and would make you take interest in adventures. At the same time, he asked them to read the *Book of Knowledge*, the *Ramayana*, and *Glimpses of World History*, which Jawaharlal Nehru had written recently.

The book, he explained, was an enlarged edition of Jawaharlal Nehru's *Letters to His Daughter* and was extremely interesting and instructive. "It gives a connected history of the world from the dawn of civilisation to recent years. And if you will go through it you will be struck by the glorious past of our great country. Learned scholars and best thinkers of modern Europe and America have testified to the unique eminence of ancient India. And this supremacy was not confined to our marvellous acquisition in the domains of philosophy, religion, art, astronomy, literature and other

branches of knowledge. Their advance in other directions were equally remarkable. Our predecessors owned vast fleets and carried on commerce and trade with foreign lands in the East as well as in the West across the seas. They had their colonies not only in neighbouring countries in Asia but also in Pacific Islands. Many works of art, nearly 200 years old, of distinctly Indian origin and character are extant in Central Asia on the one side and in far off islands like the Philippines, Java, Sumatra in South-East Pacific and in comparatively nearer regions like Siam, Indo-China, Malaya, etc. And for nearly 1000 years all these were governed by Indians. The achievements of Sri Vijaya and other similar Hindu kingdoms form part of this history. In your schools you do not get any access to these, our magnificent treasures; but you have to find some means for getting over this deficiency so that you may draw befitting inspiration from the noble heritage which the sages, seers and statements of ancient Indians have left for their descendants. We are naturally proud of our past but we should not overlook our present with its numberless shortcomings. In any case, the future rests with us, and still more so with you and others rising and growing up like you; and, I look to it with confidence, certain in the belief that you will succeed in restoring new India to its rightful place of unsurpassed glory and unfailing nobility”.

The main object in recapitulating in brief the greatness of India's past was to impress on the children that India was a great country with a rich culture, whereas under the British rule it had become culturally, politically, economically and socially weak and decadent. Similarly, on another occasion, he asked them to master not only the Hindi language but also Sanskrit. He said, “Sanskrit is our priceless heritage and has all our ancient treasures”.



Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, felicitating Govind Ballabh Pant on his seventieth birthday, 10 September 1956

While writing about the benefit of exchanging letters he goes into the question of how the art of writing was developed: "Has it ever struck you that we would not have been able to exchange any letters between us, had we not been acquainted with this art of writing? It is a marvellous device and we owe a great deal of human progress and civilisation to it. But for this method there would have been no record of the experiences, discoveries and achievements of the preceding generation. Only through this medium have the treasures built by innumerable men and women in different lands over thousands of years have been preserved and made available for our benefit".

And finally, he asked them to develop the quality of self-criticism and introspection also. That was the only way to improve oneself in life: "Do you feel stronger in body, mind and spirit than you did about this time last year? I am certain that you do, yet, on close scrutiny you may discover that in certain matters you might have achieved more and fared still better. Just recall the events from month to month to see whether you had done something which you now feel you had better left undone, or whether you had at any time failed to do what you now think you ought to have attempted. We learn only by our mistakes even when we happen to do some wrong, by some such method. Only through self-examination and self-criticism can one avoid the pitfalls and keep to the right track. One may do just the proper thing in 99 cases out of 100, but unless he detects his error in the hundredth he will continue repeating it. And unless he applies his mind to examine his conduct he will not know where he had been found wanting I should also like you to recall all important things and events of the year. What was the best achievement of yours in the course of the year of which you are proud?"

CHAPTER 7

Pant's Administrative Vision

As Chief Minister of U.P. Govind Ballabh Pant strove hard to solve the most elementary needs of the common man. The problem of food, clothing and employment, which worried the common man, received top priority. He declared: "Every man from the cradle to the grave would have freedom from want and fear." For achieving these aims, he had to take several steps. More food had to be produced through better management of agriculture. Canals had to be dug for watering the fields. Industries were to be started. In short, the economy of the state had to be revitalized. It was also necessary to educate the people.

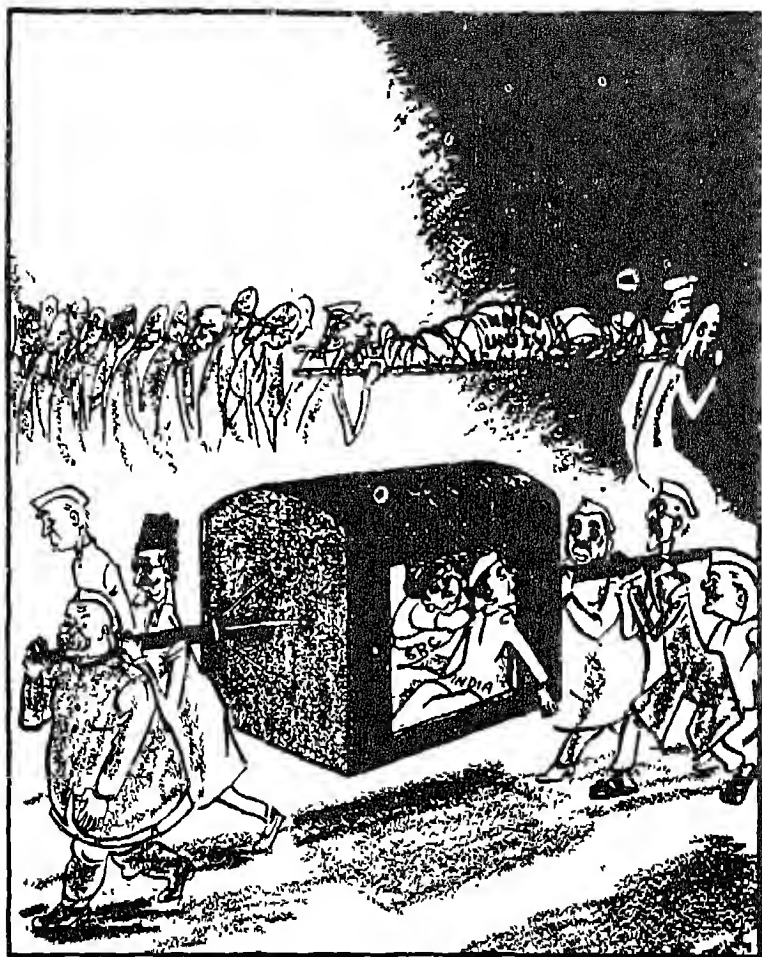
In the first year of his administration in U.P., he planned to open 60,000 schools for the education of the people. Similarly, he opened cooperative societies in two lakh villages of U.P. He also wanted that in every village, a Panchayat should be formed, which will not only resolve disputes among the village people, but also would be responsible for the economic welfare of the community. He wanted every man and woman of the village to feel responsible and contribute to the common good. The country could grow only when one and all worked to increase production.

Under Pant's government there was all around progress. In the field of agriculture much progress was made. The production of rice, wheat, pulses, sugar cane increased.

Japanese method of cultivation for rice production was adopted as an experimental measure in 35,000 acres of land. The production of rice increased from 503 lakh maunds in 1952-53 to 598 lakh maunds in 1953-54. Similar gains were recorded in the production of other crops. To bring about agricultural revolution, he laid the foundation of several irrigation projects. In the first three years, the Rangawan Dam was completed, which irrigated 90,000 acres of land. Similarly, progress was maintained in the construction of four dams in different rivers of U.P. In the eastern U.P., which was generally a poor area, a big project, the Rihand Dam was planned and work was begun.

At the same time, several industries were started. Mills and factories for production of steel, iron and paper, etc. were established. In 1955, the manufacture of cotton cloth reached an all time record. Khadi and cottage industries were given encouragement. A research centre for wool was established at Almora. Also, cement factories were set up in Mirzapur and Lucknow. A precision instruments factory for production of water meters and engineering goods was also established. Electricity production went up appreciably during the period.

The Community Project schemes were strengthened. Provision for better seeds and fertilisers for farmers was made. Thirty-five centres to look after the cattle wealth of U.P. were established. Through exhibitions and demonstrations the farmers were given information on new methods of production in agriculture. And most important of all, zamindaris were abolished.



A cartoon by Shanker Acceptance of the State Reorganisation Commission's report threatened the unity of India. In the cartoon, the palanquin-bearers in the background are those who regretted the Commission's decisions.

The palanquin-bearers in the foreground are Govind Ballabh Pant, Abul Kalam Azad, Jagjivan Ram, Gulzari Lal Nanda and Lal Bahadur Shastri, the Central Ministers, who supported the S.R.C. report. They are carrying India, wedded to the S.R.C., led by a worried Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru.

on 1 April 1952. As a consequence of this measure, the peasants became owners of the land they cultivated. Henceforth, they could invest more on their lands and work with full freedom to grow better crops.

Under Pant, U.P. became a prosperous state and the future progress was assured. In 1955, when Pant left U.P. to join the Centre as Home Minister under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, every person of U.P. felt a sense of pride, in having such a great Chief Minister, who worked for the welfare of the people and under whom the state had become stronger economically, socially and politically.

As Home Minister of India, Pant was called upon to carry out the most difficult task, i.e. of reorganisation of states. Fortunately for him, after India became independent, Sardar Patel had already brought about the integration of nearly 600 princely states into India. Yet, these states had to be brought into the fold of an uniform administrative system. After the merger of these states into the Indian Union, it was necessary to re-organise these states on a more scientific and rational basis.

The reorganisation of the States does not in any way involve any separation from India Whether a part remains in one State or is transferred to another, is not of such an enormous importance that it should bring about convulsions and controversies ... There is no occasion for it. There is none else to determine these things. We have to settle them ourselves.

—19 December 1955

Secondly, it must be remembered that the British had conquered India bit by bit. As and when the territories came under their possession, the territories were grouped together as provinces. For example, in the beginning Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were formed into one unit as the Bengal Presidency and was ruled by a governor. Later, however, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa were created into three separate provinces. In other parts of India also the position was similar. The British recognized many princely states and created provinces for running the administration smoothly, main function of which was maintenance of law and order. They did not take into account, while creating provinces, considerations of history, traditions, languages, and cultural similarity. Thus, when India became independent, a more rational basis for re-drawing of the boundaries of states of India needed to be found.

India is a vast country and people speaking different languages inhabit India. People speaking each language felt that their own mother tongue should be used in all offices and it should be made the medium of instruction at schools and colleges, etc. Each of these groups, claimed a long historical past, with its own language and tradition. Of course, most of these languages originated from the same source, i.e. Sanskrit, yet each had developed its own literature and distinct character, over a long time. The people belonging to each linguistic group, therefore, wanted a state of their own, so that they could use their mother tongue as the medium of instruction as well as for the official work. It was argued, that such states would lead to the preservation and development of their own literary and creative traditions, enriching their own state and India as a whole.



A cartoon by Shanker C D Deshmukh, who opposed the proposals on Bombay, cuts the rope which S.K. Patil has climbed. Govind Ballabh Pant is beating the drum, and Jawaharlal Nehru gives the conjurer's 'patter'

As you know, the Constitution of India has recognised Hindi as the official language for the whole country, but at the same time, other major languages of India were also given recognition in their own state. The mother tongue was made the medium of instruction in the state universities, colleges and schools. It was believed that if states were formed on the basis of one language one state, it would lead to a better government and the state would be more responsive to the wishes of the people. If the states were formed on linguistic basis, it was hoped, there would be homogeneity of interests and each state will be able to render better service, fulfilling the aspirations of the people of that region. Hence, it was thought proper to constitute states on the basis of the wishes of the people and the linguistic unity of the area.

There was general agreement among the Indian people on the question of formation of states on these principles.

As early as 1920, the Indian National Congress, which virtually represented the people of India, had accepted the principle of formation of states on linguistic basis and had declared that the provinces of Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Sindh, Karnataka would be created soon after India achieved independence. The same principle had been reiterated in 1945.

After independence, people from different parts of the country desired that states should be formed keeping in view, the linguistic and cultural unity of the area. The government of India, therefore, decided to set up a Commission called States Re-organisation Commission under the chairmanship of Justice Fazal Ali in 1953. After a good deal of study, meetings and discussions with leaders, administrators and people from different walks of life, the Commission submitted its



A cartoon by Shankar. When Govind Ballabh Pant was Home Minister, the demand for linguistic States became widely popular. In the cartoon Jawaharlal Nehru, the Prime Minister, and the Home Minister are out to stop the danger of linguism, while they are stepping deeper and deeper into the water of controversy.

report on reorganisation of states in 1955.

The governing principles behind the plan of reorganisation were linguistic unity, cultural oneness of the region, geographical nearness and economic viability. In other words, a certain geographical area inhabited by people speaking, by and large, the same language, was made into a state, provided the area had its own economic resources to efficiently run its government and had the potentialities for future development of the state.

The linguistic re-distribution of states, whatever its merits may have been, raised bitter controversies and problems which Pant was expected to resolve. In the Parliament, during debates on States Re-organisation Bill much heat was generated. Pant had to pacify the members and mollify ruffled tempers. He also had to negotiate with leaders of the affected states for an agreement.

It must be remembered that in the border districts and tahsils of adjoining states, people speaking different languages lived. For example, in the northern districts of Karnataka, touching Andhra Pradesh, Telugu speaking people also lived. Similarly, on the north-western side, there were those who spoke Marathi. Yet, the majority of the total population in these districts spoke Kannada. It was not easy to distribute each village, tahsil or district on the basis of language only.

In Andhra Pradesh, the people of Telengana demanded a separate state. Pant argued that it was irrational for the people of Telengana to demand another state especially when Andhra Pradesh had been created, wherein the majority of the people spoke Telugu.

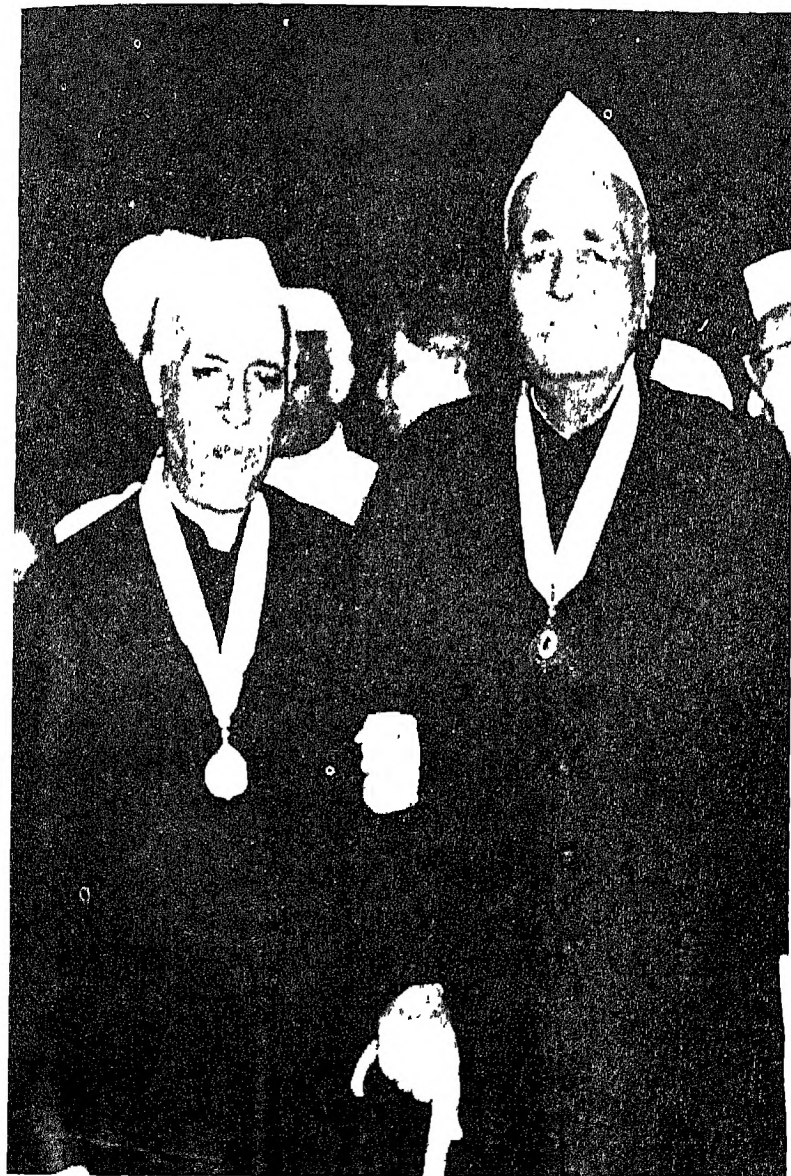
In Maharashtra, passions and emotions were aroused on the question of Bombay city. Gujarati and

Marathi speaking people laid claim on it. At one point of time, it was being argued whether Bombay city should not be kept separate as the centrally administered area. But the Marathi speaking people would have nothing of it. On the issue of Bombay city, even an eminent Minister and highly patriotic Indian like C.D. Deshmuch resigned from the Cabinet. So you can imagine the depth of emotions, the re-organisation of states aroused not only among the ill-informed people but even among the intelligent, educated and rational men and women.

The Marathi speaking people of the erstwhile Central Provinces and Berar demanded a separate state of Vidarbha. However, these areas were finally amalgamated in Maharashtra and Bombay city was also given to Maharashtra after sustained negotiations.

These examples are illustrative of the complexity of the issues which re-organisation process started. However, with untiring effort, tact, spirit of conciliation shown by Govind Ballabh Pant, it was possible to find solutions, and agreement was reached between different groups within the linguistic state and between one state and the other.

Similarly, in the Parliament, Pant displayed great debating skills and negotiating abilities. Above all, he showed a vision of future India. Jawaharlal Nehru had argued on several occasions that the paramount interest of India must prevail; that unity and stability of the country must receive priority over the considerations of language. As long as he lived, he did not allow Assam, Punjab, Haryana to be made separate states, because he felt that these states were of great strategic importance being border states. And hence, linguistic passions could not be allowed to prevail over national interest. Pant also firmly advocated that the



Jawaharlal Nehru with Govind Ballabh Pant, soon after they were honoured with 'Bharat Ratna'

fundamental unity of India must be maintained at all costs and they did not allow linguistic passions to grow.

Pant observed: "Language is no doubt a powerful factor. Its importance cannot and need not be minimised. It is not only a means of communication but it reflects the culture and character of people. So, we have to attach sufficient importance to it, but language can also be a dividing factor. If we are cut away from each other and if we think of language alone and not of so many other things in our country, then, instead of serving the cause of unification and advancement, languages become a source of disruption. We have to adjust the claims of language with the needs of national cohesion."

These were words of wisdom indeed, which ring true even today.

During these years of incessant toil and activity Pant showed immense patience and practical wisdom and endeared himself to one and all. He was one of the greatest nation builders of India and that is why in 1957, Bharat Ratna, the highest honour bestowed on an Indian, was conferred on him.

Govind Ballabh Pant passed away on 7 March 1961.

●

